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The Methodist Episcopal Church and Reconstruction

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In a paper as brief, as this one must necessarily be, I can barely hope to touch upon the possibilities of this subject and to suggest the general lines along which such an investigation might be expected to follow. One of the neglected fields of historical investigation in America is that of church history, especially in its relation to social and political movements, but there are indications at present, however, that would point to a growing interest in this particular field. Among the indications pointing to an increased interest in this field is the fact, that at the last meeting of the American Historical Association, at Charleston, South Carolina, a conference was conducted on "American Religious History" and it is hoped that such a conference will be made a permanent feature of not only the annual meeting of the American Historical Association, but of other historical societies as well.

The general outline I propose to follow in this discussion of the Methodist Episcopal Church and Reconstruction is:

First. The Status of the Methodist Church at the close of the war, and its relation to the Church South.

2. The Methodist Episcopal Church and the Freedmen.

3. The position of the Church on the question of political reconstruction.

4. Some observations in regard to the influence of the Church on parties and individuals during the period of reconstruction.

I.

During the progress of the war the Methodist Episcopal Church had given the Government of the United States a most

loyal support. Its 127 conferences in their annual sessions had passed strong, loyal resolutions;¹ the eighteen official periodicals of the Church had supported the cause of the Union by vigorous editorials, urging enlistments, by printing patriotic sermons and addresses, and by calling upon the people for supplies for the Christian and Sanitary Commissions, and by devoting a large share of their space in every issue to the giving of war news.² This Church furnished over five hundred chaplains to the armies and navies of the Union,³ besides over four hundred Methodist ministers who served as delegates under the Christian Commission, all of whom gave some of their time free of charge, to the work of the Commission, many of them going to the front.⁴ It is impossible to tell how many Methodist soldiers served in the Union Army, but the number has been variously estimated from 100,000 to 300,000, and Mr. Lincoln's statement in his address to a Methodist delegation representing the General Conference of 1864, of which Methodists are so proud, is no doubt strictly true: "That the Methodist Episcopal Church sent more soldiers to the field, more nurses to the hospitals, and more prayers to heaven than any."⁵ And lastly when the body of the martyred president was laid to rest here in Springfield, at the close of the war, a Methodist bishop, Matthew Simpson, was chosen to speak the last words at the tomb.

Before the close of the war the Methodist Episcopal Church had already entered the South with a two-fold mission,—first to carry on the work of their Church in those localities in the South, from which the ministers of the Methodist Church South had fled, on the approach of the Union Armies, leaving their churches vacant. Such churches were, by the order of the War Department at Washington, to be turned over by the various military commanders, to the loyal bishops of the North, who were to appoint loyal ministers to go down and

1. "The Methodist Episcopal Church and the Civil War." Sweet, pp. 47-95.

2. *Ibid.* Chapter VI, pp. 111-132.

3. *Ibid.* Chapter VII, pp. 133-141.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 164.

5. McPherson's *Rebellion*, p. 499.

take possession. And, second, the Methodist Episcopal Church had gone into the South to look after the freedmen, whose helpless condition appealed strongly to Christian people of every denomination.

Naturally when the war was over and the Methodist Church South began to lay plans for the reorganization of their societies throughout the South, they came in contact and conflict with these representatives of the Church from the North. There was considerable protest on the part of the Church South against the Southern policy of the Methodist Episcopal Church, for in many instances, when they came to take possession of their churches, they found them occupied by their Northern brethren. "There was much trouble," writes a minister of the Church South, "especially in the Tennessee part of our territory, where our houses of worship had been taken from us by force and our preachers threatened with all sorts of violence if they should dare come into the country to preach."⁶ The Southern bishops in their first meeting after the close of the war, drew up a pastoral letter, which was sent out over the South, in which they state that "the conduct of certain Northern Methodist bishops and preachers in taking advantage of the confusion incident to a state of war, to intrude themselves into several of our houses of worship, and in continuing to hold these places against the wishes and protests of the congregations and rightful owners." Which they say, causes them pain, "not only as working an injury to us, but as presenting to the world a spectacle ill calculated to make an impression favorable to Christianity."⁷

The Church papers of both branches of Methodism, at the close of the war were filled with discussions relating to the reconstruction of Methodism in the South. There seemed to be a widespread feeling on the part of the leaders in the North that these two largest branches of Methodism should reunite, now that the cause of the split—slavery—was forever removed. Dr. J. P. Newman, who had been placed in charge of

6. *Recollections of an Old Man—Seventy Years in Dixie.* By D. Sullens, p. 307.

7. *Annual Cyclopaedia* 1865, p. 620.

the activities of the Methodist Episcopal Church at New Orleans and vicinity, in 1864, and who was familiar with the situation through first-hand knowledge, says in a communication to one of the Church papers: "The authorities of our Church should make overtures for a reunion to the Methodist Episcopal Church South, on two general conditions: Unqualified loyalty to the general government, and the acceptance of the anti-slavery doctrine of the Church," and he further advises that if this proposal be rejected," then let the Methodist Episcopal Church plant a loyal, living Church in every city and hamlet of the South."⁸ Another writer some weeks later, however, looks upon the prospect of reunion as very doubtful, owing to the fact that the leaders in the Church South "realize that their only hope of influence, or even respectability, is in holding together, as an independent body, the Church they have ruled so long." And further on the same writer says, "They hate the Union, the North, and especially the Methodist Church."⁹ There were some leaders in the Southern Church who seemed very receptive of the idea of restoration of fraternal relations between the Churches. A correspondent of one of the influential Southern Methodist papers has this to say on the question: "We will, the whole Southern Church, will entertain any proposition coming from the North for fraternal relations, when that proposition comes from a proper source, and with reasonable and Christian conditions and suggestions.—But no proposition has yet been offered, no official communication has yet been made to us as a Church, and perhaps none ever will be."¹⁰ Still another leader in the Southern Church says, concerning Church conciliation: "The South is ready for conciliation," and infers that his Church is ready to hear and consider, in a Christian spirit, whatever proposition the Methodist Episcopal Church sees fit to make.¹¹

8. *Christian Adv. and Journal* (New York), May 25, 1865.

9. *Ibid.* June 28, 1865. Article on Methodist Reconstruction by Rev. Geo. L. Taylor.

10. *Southern Christian Advocate*, Sept. 21, 1865, quoted in article on "The Spirit of the Southern Press," *Methodist Quarterly Review*, Jan. 1866, p. 128.

11. "Episcopal Methodist," quoted as above.

A correspondence was held during the spring of 1869 between a committee of the bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church and a committee of the bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, in reference to the reunion of the two branches of the Church. The Northern bishops said in part: "It seems to us that, as the division of those Churches of our country which are of like faith and order has been productive of evil, so the reunion of them would be productive of good. As the main cause of the separation has been removed so the chief obstacle of the restoration. It is fitting that the Methodist Church, which began the disunion, should not be the last to achieve the reunion."¹² The Southern bishops replied that they regretted the controversies and expressed a disposition to co-operate to bring about a better state of things. They suggested, however, that the establishment of fraternal feelings and relations between the Churches would be a necessary precedent to reunion, and called attention to the fact of the rejection by the General Conference of 1848 of Rev. Dr. Pierce as fraternal delegate of the Southern Church. In their reply they also make complaint of the Northern missionaries and other agents who have been sent South and have attempted to disintegrate and absorb their societies and have taken possession of their houses of worship. The address ended by stating that "We have no authority to determine any thing as to the propriety, practicability and methods" of reunion "of the Churches represented by you and ourselves."

In 1866, and for several years thereafter there was considerable fear expressed by the Southern Church leaders of their Church being "swallowed" by their more powerful rivals of the North,¹³ and in order to prevent such an unwelcome assimilation, it was proposed to change the name of the Southern Church, to "Episcopal Methodist Church." The General Conference of the Methodist Church South meeting in 1866 passed a resolution to that effect but the annual Con-

12. *Annual Cyclopaedia*, 1869, pp. 432-433.

13. "The Two Methodisms, North and South," *Methodist Quarterly Review*, April, 1866.

ferences failed to concur, as the proposition could not command a three-fourths majority of the members.¹⁴ The activity of their Northern brethren in the South urged the Southern Church on to an increased effort to rehabilitate their disorganized and depleted societies,¹⁵ and there was even an attempt made as early as 1866 to invade the North. In the fall of 1866, Bishop Doggett of the Southern Church, met with the council of the Christian Union Church, an organization made up largely of Southern sympathizers, who had separated from the Methodist Episcopal Church during the war. This Church was very small, most of its membership being found in Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. Their general council met in 1866 at Clinton, Illinois, and was made up of about one hundred delegates. Bishop Doggett, however, on looking the situation over, decided that it was not best to attempt affiliation with the Church South at that time. A Northern editor of a Methodist journal, commenting on this meeting and the suggested affiliation, says: "We invite the Church South to any field in the North it can occupy. The people they propose to serve in Illinois, as God knows, need all possible moral influences. Their preachers may be compelled to go on short rations, but we will not duck them, or hang them. We will stand by them against all violence. We give them a free North, and demand for ourselves a free South."¹⁶

The aggressiveness of the Northern Church in the South, immediately after the war, resulted in the organization by 1869 of ten new annual conferences as follows:

Holston Conference, organized at Athens, Tennessee, June 1, 1865.

Mississippi Conference, organized at New Orleans, Louisiana, December 25-27, 1865.

South Carolina Conference, organized at Charleston, April 23, 1866.

14. *Annual Cyclopaedia*, 1867, pp. 494-495.

15. For an able discussion of the future of Southern Methodism, with quotations from the "Southern Christian Advocate," see "The Christian Adv. (New York), Feb. 22, 1866.

16. "The Church South in Illinois," *Western*, Oct. 10, 1866.

Tennessee Conference, organized at Murfreesborough, Tennessee, October 11-14, 1866.

Texas Conference, organized at Houston, Texas, January 3-5, 1867.

Virginia Conference, organized at Portsmouth, Virginia, January 3-7, 1867.

Georgia Conference, organized at Atlanta, Georgia, October 10-14, 1867.

Alabama Conference, organized at Talledega, Alabama, October 17-20, 1867.

Louisiana Conference, organized at New Orleans, January 13-18, 1869.

North Carolina Conference, organized at Union Chapel, North Carolina, January 14-18, 1869.¹⁷

Numbering ten in all.

In 1867 there were 66,040 full members reported, and 16,447 probationers and 220 charges.¹⁸ Some of these churches had been founded by army chaplains, as for instance, the church at Baton Rouge, where a chaplain had been appointed pastor of the Northern Methodist Church by Bishop Ames, in 1864, while he was still serving in the army.¹⁹ By 1871, the membership of these churches had grown to 135,424, and the number of preachers had become 630. Of the preachers, 260 were white and 370 were colored, while of the membership 47,000 were white people and 88,425 were colored.²⁰ The most conspicuous leader of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the South at the close of the war was Dr. J. P. Newman, who had been sent to New Orleans in 1864 to superintend the work in that vicinity. Later Dr. Newman became the pastor of the Grant family and a close personal friend of President Grant.

As a matter of course the ministry and membership of these Northern Methodist Churches, planted in the South, were Re-

17. "The Methodist Episcopal Church in the Southern States." By L. C. Matlack, in *Methodist Quarterly Review*, Jan., 1872, pp. 103-126.

18. *General Minutes of the Methodist Episcopal Church for 1867*.

19. *Western Christian Adv.*, April 26, 1865. Letter by Chaplain N. L. Brake-man.

20. *Quarterly Review*, Jan., 1872.

publicans, and were supporters of the radical reconstruction policies. It is also true that their membership included some carpet-baggers, employees of the Freedman's Bureau, and scalawags. A conspicuous example of the former is Rev. B. F. Whittemore,²¹ who was a member of the South Carolina Conference, and in 1867 was superintendent of schools in South Carolina, and later under the carpet-bagger Scott's administration represented the First Congressional District of South Carolina in Congress. He was accused of the unblushing sale of cadetships at West Point and Annapolis, and these charges were investigated by a committee, of which General Logan of Illinois was chairman, and he would have been expelled had he not resigned.²² I think it may be stated without any hesitancy, that the Methodist Episcopal Church in the South was one of the strong factors in organizing the Republican party there, and is therefore partly responsible for perpetrating carpet-bag government and Negro rule upon the prostrate South. The missionaries of the Methodist Episcopal Church, working in the South, realized that the success and perpetuity of their work there depended largely upon the triumph of the radicals in Congress. One missionary writing from the South, states that if President Johnson's policy succeeds, "Union men, missionaries and teachers of freed-men" will be in danger, and "every church and schoolhouse we have established will be destroyed," and further along he says, "If Congress fail we fail; if Congress succeeds we succeed."²³ And it is undoubtedly true that Greeley's definition of a carpet-bagger would apply to some of these Northern Methodists in the South. Some of them were "long faced, and with eyes rolled up, were greatly concerned for the education of the blacks, and for the salvation of their souls. 'Let us pray,' they

21. General Minutes, 1867.

22. Rhodes, Vol. VII., pp. 149-150.

23. *Christian Advocate* (New York), Sept. 13, 1866, p. 292. *Ann. Cyclo.* 1866, p. 489. "The progress of the M. E. Church in the late slave-holding States continues to be more rapid than that of any other of the Northern anti-slavery churches and to augur important results, ecclesiastical as well as political."

said, but they spelled pray with an 'e' and thus spelled, they obeyed the apostolic injunction to 'prey without ceasing.' ''²⁴

To infer, however, that the motives of the Methodist Episcopal Church in sending Northern missionaries into the South, and establishing their churches there, was purely a political one or was primarily selfish, is inferring too much. Many of the Church's leaders were sincere and unselfish, though perhaps many were overzealous, in their feeling that their Church was needed in the South to perform a work, which could not be performed by the Church South because of its poverty and disorganized condition.²⁵ And also many felt that the Methodist Episcopal Church was needed in the South as a center about which loyal people might congregate, in order to offset the reputed disloyalty of the Methodist Church South. Concerning, however, the position of the Church South in respect to loyalty to the United States Government, at the close of the war, there is much conflicting opinion. The Church South had been practically a unit in the support of the Confederacy, as there is much testimony to prove, but there is also much evidence that at the close of the war the Southern Church accepted the verdict and were sincere in their attempt to become once more loyal supporters of the Government at Washington. The pastoral address of the Southern bishops, issued in the summer of 1865, advises their people to adjust themselves "as citizens of the United States promptly, cheerfully, and in good faith, to all your duties and responsibilities," and this course they feel is called for "both by a sound judgment and an enlightened conscience."²⁶ Bishop Paine advises the Southern Methodists "to resume in good faith their former positions as law-abiding and useful citizens," and he urged the ministers "to use their influence both publicly and privately, for the promotion of peace and quietness among all classes."²⁷ Bishop Pierce likewise advises the people to accept "the issues of the war as the will of God," and tells

24. Reports of Com. House of Rep., 2 S. 42. Cong. Vol. II, p. 477.

25. Christian Adv., Feb., 22, 1866.

26. Annual Cyclo., 1865, p. 620.

27. Methodist Quarterly Review, Jan., 1866, p. 125.

them not to leave their loyalty in doubt by unmanly repinings, "or by refusing the terms of offered amnesty."²⁸ Indeed a Southern Methodist paper went so far as to claim that the "Southern Methodist Church today is more thoroughly loyal to the Government, more to be trusted, than the Northern Methodist Church. * * * Our oaths have been taken in good faith and we intend to keep them."²⁹ While still another Southern writer asserts, "We take our position under the Government to promote peace," and the South "may rest assured that Providence has restored us to the Union, and the Union to us, for purposes and ends wise and beneficent, and reaching far into the future."³⁰

On the other hand, there is much Northern opinion to the contrary, and there was a very strong feeling in the North that the Southern Church was still far from loyal. And it is not at all strange that there should have been such diversity of opinion as to the loyalty of the Southern Church, since Generals Grant and Schurz disagreed on the same general question in regard to the whole South. One Northern editor says, "The loyalty of the Southern Methodist Church is probably much the same kind and degree with that of the mass of 'reconstructed rebels,'"³¹ and again the same editor suspects that "Much of the loyalty of the South, (meaning the Southern Church) is only from the lips outward and that only where Union bayonets compel it."³² Still another writer asserts that the Southern Methodists "hate the Union and the North,"³³ while Dr. J. P. Newman felt the need of a "loyal, living" Methodist Episcopal Church "in every city and hamlet of the South."³⁴

II.

A second reason which called the Methodist Episcopal Church into the South at the close of the war, was the great

28. *Methodist Quarterly Review*, Jan., 1866, p. 125, from an article on "The Spirit of the Southern Methodist Press."

29. "The Episcopal Methodist" (Richmond), Oct. 11, 1865.

30. "The Southern Christian Advocate," Oct. 5, 1865.

31. *Christian Adv. and Journal*, Jan. 25, 1866.

32. *Ibid.*, Aug. 3, 1865.

33. *Ibid.*, June 8, 1865.

34. *Ibid.*, May 25, 1865.

mass of ignorant and needy freedmen. The Church in the North had already begun work among the freedmen, before the close of the war, and missions for colored people had been established as early as 1862,³⁵ and by the end of the war, the Church was giving general support to a number of Freedmen's associations.³⁶ During the years 1864 and 1865 the Methodist Church had sent out several missionaries to Negroes in the South, and the Missionary Society had appropriated a considerable sum of money for their support, and for the establishment of churches, Sunday schools and day schools. The Church papers and the various conferences had urged upon the Government the necessity of establishing a Freedman's Bureau, and among the resolutions passed by the General Conference of 1864 was one stating "that the best interests of the freedmen, and of the country demand legislation that shall foster and protect this people," and they urge upon Congress to establish a bureau of freedmen's affairs.³⁷ And after the organization of the Freedmen's Bureau the Methodist Church became a staunch defender of its work, and a number of Methodist ministers and laymen found employment in it. The best known Methodist layman engaged in the work of the bureau was General Clinton B. Fisk, who was assistant commissioner for Kentucky, and his work was given extravagant praise in the Church press.³⁸

When the war was over the Methodist Church greatly increased their work among the freedmen, and by 1871 there were 88,425 colored members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the South, and a number of schools had been established for them, in various sections. In 1866 the Freedman's Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in Cincinnati, by a convention of ministers and laymen, called for that purpose and in 1868 the organization

35. *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Feb. 27, 1862.

36. Sweet, pp. 171-172.

37. *General Conference Journal*, 1864, p. 130.

38. *Western Christian Adv.*, Oct. 18, 1865. An editorial on the "Freedmen's Bureau" in which General Fisk receives high praise.

was given official recognition by the Church and, has remained one of its principal benevolent organizations ever since.³⁹

The Colored Methodist Episcopal Church at Baton Rouge, which was organized in the spring of 1864, is a typical example of the better class of colored churches of this period. This Church, according to the report of the Union chaplain at that post, had nearly three hundred members in 1865, and was in a flourishing condition generally. The congregation worshipped in the basement of the white Methodist Church, and often Union chaplains or ministers from the ranks preached for them. The colored churches were, as a rule, well supplied with local preachers, exhorters and class leaders, and in the church above referred to there were two local preachers, six exhorters and eight class leaders,—an excellent training for future political leaders among the colored race.⁴⁰

The attitude of the Southern Church toward the Negro seemed most commendable. At least the editors of their Church papers professed a humane and Christian interest in them, and they further profess that they will meet in the spirit of Christ, the Northern missionary who comes among them to do good and they also state that they do not intend to be out-done in deeds of kindness towards the Negro race. One editor says: "As the father would tenderly nurture the child, and stimulate, encourage and direct his labor to bring it to the productive point, so a wise political economy would impel Southern people to do the same by the Negro."⁴¹ Again the same editor says some months later, "The duty is no less ours, (to bring the gospel to the Negro) now than it was before the slaves were emancipated. It is as much our duty to look after their spiritual interests as it is to send missionaries to the Indians or to China."⁴² Still another Southern editor says they will rejoice if the "Northern Christians" do half as much

39. Report of the Freedman's Aid Society, 1868, pp. 5-8. The first officers of the new society were: President, Bishop D. W. Clark; vice-presidents, Gen. C. B. Fisk, Hon. Grant Goodrich, Rev. J. W. Wiley; corresponding secretary, Rev. J. M. Walden; field secretary, Rev. R. S. Rust; recording secretary, Rev. J. M. Reed; treasurer, Rev. Adam Poe.

40. Western, April 26, 1865.

41. Southern Christian Adv., Sept. 21, 1865.

42. Ibid., Sept. 21, 1865.

as they declare they intend to do, and as to their own work he says "While we boast of no great wealth, and a very humble share of piety is all we claim, yet, when the genuineness of our regard for the colored race is brought fairly to the test the logic of facts will vindicate us."⁴³ The Southern ministers as well as the editors were also kindly disposed to the Negro, though in many instances they advised them to leave the Methodist Church South, and enter the Negro churches, such as Zion's Methodist Church or the African Methodist Episcopal Church. One minister states that he told the colored members of his church about Zion's Methodist Church, and "We got the colored people together and after a little talk they agreed to go in a body to that Church, so I took the church register and transferred them."⁴⁴

The attitude of the Methodist leaders in the North toward the Negro, was, as we now look at it, foolishly sentimental. They advocated, from the beginning of the war, not only emancipation, but the enfranchisement of the Negro as well. They exalted and exaggerated his virtues, and were more or less blind to his ignorance and glaring weaknesses and faults. Resolutions were passed by the conferences recognizing the freedmen as "native born citizens entitled to all the privileges, immunities and responsibilities of citizenship, including * * * the protection of law and the right of suffrage," and they further declared that they would not slacken their efforts until these rights are obtained for the Negro.⁴⁵ Editors wrote stirring editorials on the subject of Negro enfranchisement, and glowing reports from the missionaries in the South were printed from time to time, telling of the great progress of the Negro, and of his fitness for citizenship.

Nothing, perhaps, could have been better fitted for the organization of the Negroes into groups for the purpose of their political control by white leaders than their organization into congregations under the guidance of a white missionary. But just how much of a political role such congregations played

43. Richmond Christian Adv., Oct. 26, 1865.

44. Recollections of an Old Man. D. Sullens, p. 327.

45. New York East Conference Minutes, 1865, pp. 41-42.

during the period of Negro rule, I am not prepared, because of the lack of evidence, to state, but that they did play a considerable political role, I think may be maintained without doubt. As I have already suggested, the Methodist Church particularly, is a good school, for the training of speakers, for it gives the layman, as well as the minister, plenty of opportunity in that direction and statistics show that the Negro churches were well supplied with local preachers, exhorters and class leaders. We also know that a number of Negro preachers became prominent and occupied important political positions during the years of Negro supremacy. For instance, in the constitutional convention of South Carolina, at the beginning of carpet-bag rule, there were seven colored preachers out of fifty-seven colored delegates,⁴⁶ and a colored preacher by the name of Cain was one of South Carolina's congressmen at this time.⁴⁷ And also one of the only two colored men who ever became members of the United States senate was a colored preacher, one Rev. Hiram B. Revels, from Mississippi.⁴⁸ The other colored United States senator was Blanche K. Bruce, also of Mississippi.

III.

There remains yet for us to discuss the position of the Church on the question of political reconstruction.

It would be natural to expect that the Methodist Church, having been an extremely loyal church during the war, should at the close of the war take an extremely radical position on the question of reconstruction. And this is exactly what happened. In fact, nowhere have I found a more bitter denunciation of the South, or a more extreme vindictiveness toward those lately in rebellion than that expressed by the leaders in the Church and by the Church press. Especially was this spirit manifest after the assassination of Mr. Lincoln. Even

46. "Voice from South Carolina." Leland.

47. Proceedings of South Carolina Constitutional Convention, pp. 522-525.

48. Schouler, Vol. VII., p. 170 (foot-note).

Bishop Simpson, in his funeral oration⁴⁹ over the body of the martyred president, delivered here in Springfield, is not entirely free from this spirit and says, toward its close, "Let every man who was a senator or representative in Congress and who aided in beginning this rebellion and thus led to the slaughter of our sons and daughters, be brought to speedy and certain punishment. Let every officer educated at public expense, who having been advanced to position, has perjured himself and turned his sword against the vitals of his country be doomed to this. * * * Men may attempt to compromise and to restore these traitors and murderers in society again, but the American people will arise in their majesty and sweep all such compromises and compromisers away, and will declare that there shall be no peace to rebels." The resolutions passed by the Boston Methodist preachers' meeting, at their first meeting following the death of Lincoln, are equally vindictive. "Never," they declare, "will the nation feel its sense of honor and justice vindicated until the leaders of this unprovoked and wicked rebellion shall have suffered condign punishment, the penalty of death." And they further resolve that "we hold the national authority bound by the most solemn obligation to God and to man, to bring all the civil and military leaders of the rebellion to trial by due course of law, and when they are clearly convicted, to execute them."⁵⁰

The Methodist press generally supported the early acts of President Johnson's administration,⁵¹ but no journals were quicker to question his later acts and motives than the Church papers, and Congressional reconstruction found no more loyal supporters than the Methodist editors, and other Church leaders. The editor of the *Western Christian Advocate* of Cincinnati has this to say of President Johnson's reconstruction policy in an editorial at the time of the convening of Congress in December, 1865: "The experience of the president in the

49. *Christian Advocate* (New York), May 11, 1865. Gives the funeral oration of Bishop Simpson in full.

50. *Minutes of the Boston Methodist Preachers' Meeting* (Mss.), April 24, 1865.

51. *Western Christian Adv.*, June 14, 1865.

exercise of a broad and even excessive magnanimity, seems not to have been more satisfactory to him in the end, than it was to many of us in the beginning."⁵² And the editor of the *New York Advocate*, at the time of the New Orleans riot, begins a long editorial with, "Among the severest chastisements that Divine Providence inflicts upon sinning nations, is giving them incompetent, obstinate and violent rulers."⁵³ And then the editorial proceeds to lay the blame for the riot and the bloodshed at the president's door. In the next issue of this same journal, the president again comes in for a scathing rebuke, in an editorial entitled, "The Nation's Peril."⁵⁴

As the contest between the president and Congress became more and more bitter, the Methodist papers became more and more open in their hostility to President Johnson. Commenting, in January, 1868, on the removal of two Union generals from commands in the South, one Methodist editor remarks: "Unless reasons more plausible than any that have hitherto been adduced, shall be furnished for this act, it will add a still darker hue to the reputation of the chief magistrate of this nation."⁵⁵ And when the news came that President Johnson was impeached, this editor exultingly announces at the beginning of an editorial entitled "Impeachment": "Andrew Johnson is impeached before the Senate of the United States for high crimes and misdemeanors. * * * He has at last * * * boldly set at defiance the laws of the land. * * * Our readers will remember how the beastly drunkenness of Mr. Johnson, three years ago at Louisville and Cincinnati and Washington on the day of inauguration, was denounced in our columns, and how we begged the people forthwith to demand his resignation. His moral corruption has ever made him a disgrace to the nation."⁵⁶ How much of this righteous indignation is due to Mr. Johnson's supposed habits, or to disgust at his reconstruction policy, would be hard to determine.

52. *Western Christian Advocate*, Dec. 6, 1865.

53. *Christian Adv.* (New York), Aug. 30, 1866.

54. *Ibid.*, Sept. 6, 1866. See still another editorial in the issue of Oct. 4, 1866, on "The Issues Before the Country."

55. *Western Christian Adv.*, Jan. 8, 1865.

56. *Ibid.*, March 4, 1868.

On one occasion, when Bishop Ames was presiding at the Indiana conference in the fall of 1867, meeting in Indianapolis, a retired Methodist preacher was making a fervent speech, bearing upon his long experience in the ministry, and in the course of his remarks said, "I would rather be a Methodist preacher than to be president of the United States." Just at that juncture Bishop Ames, who had been a strenuous supporter of the Union during the war, said in his piping voice, "Most anybody else would, than the kind of president we've got now." This remark brought out the most boisterous laughter, and so long did it continue that the old brother could not finish his speech.⁵⁷

Such bold statements of political opinion, as we have noticed, both in the Methodist press and on the platform, is evidence in itself, that the Methodist Church in the North was practically a unit on the question of political reconstruction, and in their opposition to President Johnson. If there had been a divided opinion in the Church on this issue, such bold statements as I have given, would not have been reiterated again and again, and there would have appeared some protest. But nowhere have I been able to find even a breath of protest.

IV.

In conclusion I wish first of all to draw some rather general conclusions in regard to the influence of the Church on the politics of the period, and then to observe in a couple of instances the influence of the Church over important individuals during the reconstruction period.

After the evidence which we have just read, I think I am safe in observing that at the close of the war the Methodist Episcopal Church was practically a unit in favor of the radical or Congressional reconstruction policies. They favored such policies because they had felt strongly on the question of slavery and the war, and a feeling of vindictiveness toward the South was the natural result. Second, the Methodist Church exerted political influence of no small power in the

57. This incident occurred Sept. 14, 1867. Recollections of Dr. H. A. Gobin.

South, as we have already pointed out, through its missionary operations among the Negroes especially, and thirdly the political influence of the Methodist Church in the North was perhaps stronger at this period than it had ever been before or since, and it is a rather significant fact that both General Grant and President Hayes were Methodists.

And now in closing I wish to call brief attention to some interesting personal relations which seem to me significant. One of the most interesting of such relationships was that existing between President Grant and Rev. Dr. J. P. Newman. As already noted, Dr. Newman was the most influential man sent into the South by the Methodist Episcopal Church at the close of the war, and his positions on Southern questions were as might be expected, extremely radical, and he was not at all reluctant in letting his opinions be known. During President Grant's administrations, Dr. Newman became pastor of the church in Washington attended by the Grant family, and with them and especially with the president, he became very intimate. Dr. George F. Shrady, who was one of the consulting surgeons during the last illness of Grant, and who had opportunity of seeing these two men often together, observes that "There could be no doubt of a great bond of sympathy between these two men, who from long association, understood each other perfectly,"⁵⁸ and while General Grant was at Mt. McGregor, Dr. Newman was in more or less constant attendance, and it was there that he on one occasion, when they thought the general was dying, administered to him the sacrament of baptism⁵⁹ and received him into membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Knowing the susceptibility of General Grant to be influenced by men for whom he had a personal liking, and knowing Dr. Newman's position and strong feeling on the question of Southern reconstruction, and knowing that the success of his Church in the South depended more or less upon the triumph of radical reconstruction, I can hardly escape the conclusion,

58. "General Grant's Last Days," by Geo. F. Shrady, M.D., *Century*, June, 1908, p. 276.

59. *Ibid.*

that Dr. Newman had something to do with determining General Grant's personal attitude.

Another interesting personal relationship was that between Dr. Newman and the Logans. Mrs. Logan especially was a staunch Methodist and was a great admirer of Dr. Newman. Speaking of him in her *Reminiscences*, recently published, she says: "His sermons were, without exception, full of inspired language. * * * He was a large man with a big head full of brains. * * * He was intensely patriotic and courageous, and there was never any doubt as to the meaning of his utterances. He was devoted to General Grant, and losing all patience with General Grant's detractors, he was ever ready to defend him valiantly." Mrs. Logan says that when President Hayes, himself a Methodist, became president, he refused to attend the Metropolitan Church, where Dr. Newman was the pastor, because General Grant attended that church, and Dr. Newman was always defending Grant and all the "skulduggery" of his administration.⁶⁰ It was Dr. Newman, also, who was at the death-bed of General Logan,⁶¹ as he had been in constant attendance at the deathbed of his chief, General Grant.

It is very interesting, if not significant, that this minister, Dr. Newman, afterwards Bishop Newman, should have had such close personal relationships with these two public men, both of whom played such an important role in the reconstruction of the Southern States.

As suggested at the outstart, this paper is simply meant to be suggestive, rather than conclusive, though I am convinced that the lines of investigation here indicated so imperfectly, would yield, if followed, direct clarification to the period under consideration, as well as illuminating and interesting sidelights.

60. "Reminiscences of a Soldier's Wife." By Mrs. John A. Logan, pp. 369-370.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 430.